

SOUND ADVICE 2011

[Back](#) pipes|drums [Home](#)

Miller of drones

Published: Nov 12, 2005



Gellaitry Highland bagpipe

Stirling, Scotland

www.gellaitry.com, £1100

Reviewed by Ken Eller

Having spent close to 10 years in the pipe-making trade, I have come to appreciate the skills required to be a world-class maker. Years of apprentice training under a mindful master craftsman and time spent as a journeyman allow the maker to hone those skills as well as develop pride in the finished product. There are currently many pipe-makers plying their trade in countries around the world, but few display the careful craftsmanship of Tim Gellaitry of Stirling, Scotland. His pedigree is impeccable: five years apprenticed to William Sinclair of Leith and another eight years as a craftsman with the firm before venturing out on his own.

I recently had the pleasure of playing a set of half-silver Gellaitry pipes for more than a month and am most impressed with every aspect of the instrument—its appearance, design, sound and stability. His sets are quite unique because of the mounts. Made from fine-grained African Blackwood and bored with gun drills, the drones have beautifully burnished bores. The projecting mounts are made of boxwood, a light tan wood that stands out for its beauty and warmth.

The mounts confirm Gellaitry's credentials, for they are very much in the Sinclair fashion, maybe slightly larger, but certainly with the soft symmetric lines of those made in Leith. Likewise, the gently curved shoulders of the tuning chambers in the top sections (unlike the square shoulders of other makers), continues a Sinclair tradition. The combing is exceptional. I went to the trouble to actually count the number of rings (eight) in all pieces and found his work amazingly consistent. The beading has been carefully performed as well. Combine this with a hard-burnished hand finish and buffed hard wax outer sheen, and you have one of the most impressive looking sets of pipes I have seen in years. In fact, I sort of market-tested the appearance by showing these pipes to many of my piping students. Their comments ranged from "a piece of beauty" to a resounding "awesome mounts."

Did I mention that I played them for over a month? This is where the instrument impressed me even more. The Gellaitry pipe chanter is resonant and delivers volume from low A through the top hand. It pitched out totally balanced at 478 Hz, exactly where I pitch my current solo chanter. Harmonics produced by the chanter locked fabulously with the basic frequencies and harmonics of the drones, making this pipe extremely

easy to tune.

The tonal blend created was stable through many hours of playing. When inserting my synthetic reeds into the drones, I couldn't help but notice the wide diameter of the reed seats. Too many makers have forgotten this and players have difficulty in seating their reeds. Obviously this instrument was designed by a player for players. The tenor drones tuned well up on the hemp line, a mark that all good players set to maximize the resonance produced by the top chambers of each drone. If there was any inconsistency, I found the two tenor tops with slightly different inner diameters, but I am only talking a thousandth or two. The bass top section was set high on the hemp line as well and forced a tuning of the midsection, about "two fingers" up from the projecting mount, leaving ample room for any higher pitches.

My only regret about this instrument is the fact that I must return it to Tim Gellaitry. I do so reluctantly, with the knowledge that I will have to rely once again on my set of Henderson's for my piping pleasure. Tim Gellaitry is a first-rate craftsman. Pipers of all levels can rest assured that a pipe bought from his Stirling shop will be a quality instrument in both sound and appearance.

I haven't talked price yet. You will find the basic price slightly higher than some makers. According to the Gellaitry Web site (www.gellaitry.com), the basic set with boxwood mounts retails for £850, so at today's rate that would amount to approximately \$1800 CAD. But, as my father always said, "You must pay for quality." The choice is a good one.

Ken Eller was a partner in Jack Dunbar's bagpipe-making business for nearly a decade. He led one of North America's greatest Grade 1 bands, Clan MacFarlane, for more than 20 years and most recently played with the 78th Fraser Highlanders. A resident of Fonthill, Ontario, Ken Eller judges and teaches throughout the world, and he was the subject of the March 2004 Piper & Drummer Interview.

p|d

*What do **you** think? We always want to hear from our readers, so please use our comment system to provide your thoughts!*

Do you have a product that you would like to have considered for review? Be sure to [contact pipes|drums](#). We can't report what we don't know about! Please remember to support the businesses that advertise and make the not-for-profit p|d possible.

[View Full Site](#) | © 2011 pipes|drums. All rights reserved.